Plain Words With the Careless

A sermon
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"When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, 'What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me.."- Luke 8:28.

IF we understand these words to be the exclamation of the evil spirit which tormented this poor demonian, they are very natural words and one can very readily understand them, for the Presence of Christ is such a great torment to the Prince of Evil, that he might well cry out, "Are you come to torment us before our time?" If we would put Satan to rout we have only to preach the Lord Jesus in the power of the Spirit, for this is the Hell of devils. Hence it is that he roars so much against Gospel preachers—he roars because the Gospel makes him hurt.

But if these words are looked upon as the language of the man himself, they are most extraordinary. In fact, they are so singularly mad and foolish that we can only account for them by the fact that though it was a man who spoke, yet the devil was in him—for surely none but a man possessed with a devil would say to Jesus, who alone could bless him, "Depart from me!" or say, "Torment me not!" And yet there are tens of thousands of men in this world who are saying just the same thing! Thousands of persons appear to be far more anxious to escape from salvation than to escape from eternal wrath! They avoid Heaven's love with scrupulous diligence and the prayer of their life seems to be, "Keep me, Lord, from Heaven! Prevent me ever being saved! Give me the full swing of my sins and let me live so as to ruin my soul!"

Conduct most strange! From where comes such folly? The desire and determination of some men to destroy themselves are fixed and resolute to the last degree. Their self-hate and their suicidal avoidance of mercy's thousand exhortations and entreaties are so extraordinary that, I repeat, we can only account for men being so besotted and maddened by the fact that Satan has mastery over them and leads them captive at his will.

Before I proceed to discuss the words, themselves, there is, however something to be learned from them. We may learn that a man may know a great deal about true religion and yet be a total stranger to it. He may know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God Most High, and yet he may be possessed of a devil—no, as in this case he may be a den for a whole legion of devils! Mere knowledge does nothing for us but puff us up. We may know, and know, and know and so increase our responsibility without bringing us at all into a state of hope.

Beware of resting in head-knowledge! Beware of relying upon orthodoxy, for without love, with all your correctness of doctrine you will be as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal!

It is well to be sound in the faith, but the soundness must be in the heart as well as in the head. There is as ready a way to destruction by the road of orthodoxy as by the paths of heterodoxy. Hell has thousands in it who were never heretics. Remember that the devils "believe and tremble." There are no sounder theoretical believers than devils, and yet their conduct is not affected by what they believe and consequently they still remain at enmity to the Most High God. A mere head-believer is on a par, therefore, with fallen angels and he will have his portion with them forever unless Divine Grace shall change his heart.

We learn, also, from the words of the text, that there are a great many bad prayers prayed in the world. The man said, "I beseech You, torment me not." He was earnest to get Christ to let him alone—very earnest. Many, many, many well-worded prayers which have been excellent in themselves, have not had half so much earnestness in them as this. Both men and swine run hard when Satan drives them, but the best of us are slow, indeed, in going to Heaven. A sinner's prayer for his own misery is often a grim and awful thing to look upon from its horrible earnestness. Yes, how often have we heard men offer prayers which it would be a very dreadful thing if God were to hear? What are oaths and blasphemies

but prayers? They are prayers of the worst kind! A thousand mercies, indeed, that God has never granted the swearer's prayer but has been pleased to spare him though he has often invoked curses on his own head.

Swearer, down on your knees this moment and thank the Almighty that He has not taken you at your word! If you have ever made a league with death and a covenant with Hell and have asked that God would destroy you, be thankful that He has not done so. Take that as a sign of mercy, and pray that the long-suffering of God may lead you to repentance. I hope and pray that his having spared you is with the intent that He may save you eternally.

Now we shall come to the words themselves, though we shall not take them quite in the order in which they stand. The first thing to which I shall call your attention is a mischievous misapprehension—there are many foolish people in the world who imagine that Christ comes to torment them and that His religion would make them miserable. The second thing is a querulous question, "What have I to do with You?" Many, many think that they have nothing to do with religion, nothing to do with Christ, and they ask, more or less contemptuously or earnestly, as their state of mind may be, "What have 1 to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God Most High?"

I. First, we have to do with A VERY MISCHIEVOUS MISAPPREHENSION. It is currently thought among mankind that to receive the Gospel of Christ would be to cease to be happy—to give up all joyfulness and cheerfulness—and to doom one's self to a life of melancholy. I shall argue upon that point a little, and I shall begin by admitting some things which are, frankly, to be acknowledged. An honest man, when he has espoused a cause,

must not go in for it blindly but must be willing to make admissions where truth requires them, even should they appear to be dead against him.

Now, I will admit that if men will turn from their sins, the Gospel will, if it gets at their consciences, make them miserable. It will act as salt to raw wounds or as a whip to rebellious backs. There are some of you of this sort whose pictures I could easily paint so that you would know yourselves at once. I have heard of and personally known persons who have been in the habit of glaring vices, say, for instance, drunkenness, and yet they are here with remarkable regularity. They have been pleased, either with the greatness of the congregation, or else with the particular manner of the minister and they have come again and again! And there has been some kind of impression produced that they had a hankering after the best things.

They have, by-and-by, reasoned with themselves, "I cannot go on as I have done and yet continue here—the man makes his knife too sharp. I must give up my sins or leave him altogether." And so, after awhile, feeling themselves rendered perfectly wretched by the sermons to which they have listened, they have given up attending the means of Divine Grace. Many and many a man has gone down those steps under the columns in front, yonder, grinding his teeth and stamping his feet, and vowing that he would never come again! And yet he is the very man who is sure to come again before long! I am often very glad when that is the effect produced, for I have hope of men who have enough conscience left to be irritated by the Truth of God.

Better a wrathful hearer than a forgetful hearer! If the arrow irritates, let us hope that it has gone deep. I admit, then, I must admit it, that if men are resolved to keep their sins it will be a very uncomfortable thing for them to hear about Christ Jesus, and holiness, and happiness, and sin, and the wrath to come. Jesus Christ's coming near them in the preaching of the Gospel will torment impenitent sinners and make them feel alarm and terror which they will try to drown by opposing the Truth.

Why, in the old Methodist times when they took John Nelson and impressed him to make him a soldier, they said, "Take the fellow away! Why, a man cannot nowadays get comfortably drunk, nor swear a round oath but what there is some Methodist cant or other who is sure to reprove him!" Just so—wherever true religion is in the world it makes sinners sin uncomfortable. The Christian is a standing rebuke to the ungodly! A man who is honest, and sober, and decent, and chaste, and who lives as a Christian should live is such a rebuke to the wicked that if they cannot burn him—and perhaps they would like to do so in these times, yet, if they can but ignore him, or insinuate that he is a hypocrite and that he has some sinister motive—they can, then, be a little comfortable at the service of evil and warm their hands at Satan's fire.

I trust this Tabernacle will always be too hot a place for such of you as mean to indulge in secret sins and hold on to hidden wickedness. Never will I, so long as God spares this

tongue, flinch from telling you of your sins, for if I did I should expect that your guilt would rest upon me and that the blood of your souls would lie at my door. O that we may

have Grace to be far more faithful even though your approbation should turn to rancor! Yes, admit it if you mean to go to Hell! Then you need not come to hear the Gospel because your doing so will only make you uncomfortable in this world and be of no service to you in the next.

Again, I must make another admission, namely, that a great many people, when they become serious for the first time and give themselves to Christ, are rendered for a time very miserable. There are some whose repentance is so exceedingly bitter that they make the very worst of company. They shun company themselves, and those who love merriment shun them. The terrors of the Lord are upon them and they are feeling the burden of sin—it is no wonder that a cloud hangs over their brows!

We read John Bunyan's life and we cannot but admit that for years he was rendered, by religion, as wretched a man as he well could—and many others have passed through just that same state of mind, some for days, some for months, and others even for years. But allow me to remind you that this is not at all the fault of our Lord Jesus Christ, for if these people had come at once to Him and obeyed the great Gospel command, "Believe and live," they would have had instantaneous peace! Did you note that verse in the hymn which was given out just now? It told us that no preparations were needed before coming to Jesus. I will quote it again—

"This fountain, though rich, from charge is quite clear. The poorer the wretch, the more welcome here! Come needy, and guilty, come loathsome and bare; You can't come too filthy, come just as you are."

Now, if a soul will but cast itself at once upon the glorious work of the great Redeemer, it shall then and there be saved. If those who were so long in soul trouble had but come to Christ, and had trusted Him with all their sins about them, they would have had peace at once! And the reason why they were so long a time in misery was because they did not go to Jesus Christ but kept on looking to themselves—looking for this feeling and that good action, and that other experience—and dreaming that because they did not see these, they could not be saved. O that they had accepted at once the simple Truth of God that, "the blood of Jesus Christ, God's dear Son, cleanses us from all sin."

Now, if a man is under a physician's care and he has a medicine sent to him, if he should be months in getting well you cannot blame the physician if you find that the medicine stands untasted upon the mantel! Why the man has been trying 20 other things and he has only gotten worse and worse. It is a good thing that he wishes to be healed—but how much better would it be if he would but try the right medicine which alone can cure him? If he does not try the prescription it is not the fault of the physician if he is long a sufferer—it is his own fault!

Even so, if a man will not believe in Jesus, blame not the Master if he finds no salvation. O, poor troubled hearts, you need not go that roundabout way of sorrow—tempted and tossed about, and tormented with a thousand doubts and fears—there is a far nearer and surer way to eternal life! If you come to Jesus Christ straightway and fall down before the Cross, and rest your soul simply there, you shall find joy and peace this very night—before you go to your rest you shall know that you are "accepted in the Beloved."

But even if this pain were necessary, notice this—is it not a very small cost to pay—to be rendered wretched for a little time if afterwards there shall come perfect peace, and if, especially, as the result of that there shall be eternal salvation in the world to come? Why, supposing a part of your foot has become diseased and a bone has to be taken out. You do not say, "Oh, but the surgeon cuts so deep, and he has to use so many dreadful tools!" Of course he has, but if he can save the limb, or preserve your life, nobody thinks of a little pinch so long as his life is preserved! Ah, if you had to stand waiting for Jesus at Mercy's gate in the cold with the hailstorm of wrath pelting you for ages upon ages, it would be a small thing to endure if you might afterwards enter into the rest which remains for the people of God! Even on that computation the thing is a good bargain, and he that is wise will reckon the cost to be little enough.

But now that I have admitted this, I want to ask those who say that Jesus Christ would make them miserable a question or two. I have admitted a great deal—now be fair and open with me in return. You are afraid of being made miserable. Are you so mightily happy, then, at the present moment? You are afraid that if you became a Christian you would be melancholy. Now, tell me, are you so wonderfully full of joy at the present moment? Are you so marvelously happy that you are afraid of damaging your little paradise? Excuse me if I say that I rather question whether those Elysian fields of yours are so very delightful! I have my doubts about those charming pleasures of yours and suspect them to be more paint than reality.

Ah, my Friends, we little know the miseries of the wicked. Take the drunkard, for instance—what a jolly, genial fellow he is! Yes, but what does Solomon say? "Who has woe?" Hear that word again, "Who has woe?" Why, this man whom the world calls "such a jolly fellow" has woe because he tarries long at the wine and mingles his strong drink. If men were rational, none of them would take the drunkard's woe for the drunkard's mirth. There is no comparison—he has a dear price, a heavy penalty to pay for all his apparent joy. Rare old cordials turn out to be blue ruin and fine sparkling wines end in darkness and death!

It is so with all vices—they froth a little and then turn to wormwood—the dregs of which all the wicked of the earth shall drink. Who does not know that the penalty of fleshly vices is too horrible for us to describe? A man cannot sin without bringing upon himself some sorrow even in this life. Wretchedness follows at the tail of transgression. Do not tell me a working man who spends his money at the gin palace, or the beer shop can have a happy

home. The woman who gads about here and there, visiting this and that place of pleasure and amusement and neglecting her family does not find it all happiness. I am sure she does not—her face is evidence to the contrary. Those who lie, and cheat, and swear and forget God—I am quite sure they do not find so much joy as they profess to have.

So, then, to make short work of the business, you who whine about religion as being melancholy are generally a set of hypocrites! So come here, Sir, and let me tell you a little plain truth. Why, you pitiful creature! You tell me that religion would make you melancholy when you are as melancholy, now, as you can pretty well live! You have looked after this excitement and that to try and forget yourself! And when you sit down when you are sober and calculate what you are, and where you are going, you know very well that nothing could make you much more miserable than you are, and you are about as dull now as you could be! Do not make this mighty fuss about religion making you miserable when you are miserable already! But, like a sensible man, find no fault with what you have not tried.

There is another question I would like to ask you, and that is, if you reply that you are happy now, I should be glad to know whether the present happiness which you enjoy, or say you enjoy, will last you very long? The leaves are now falling very rapidly from the trees and they remind us that we, too, must die. Will your mirth and your jollity support you in your dying hour? Do you expect that these things will buoy you up amidst the chill waves of the black sea of Death? No, you admit that all your rare jollity must end then—well, is not this a poor prospect for a dying pillow? Is this a wise choice, to choose to die without a hope? And after death—what then?

Will your present worldly delights minister comfort to you in another state? Do you expect that the gaieties and vanities of life, in which both rich and poor indulge, will be a comfort to you in looking back upon them when your soul is separated from your body, and you stand before the bar of God? And if you die unsaved, and God condemns you, driving you from His Presence, do you think that the merriment of the ballroom, the theater, and the drinking bar will, in their remembrance, yield drops of water to your burning tongue in eternity? Will these things be pillows for your aching head in Hell? Will the sinful joys of earth breathe the soft breath of consolation upon you when Christ has said, "Depart, you cursed"?

You know very well they will not! Listen to me, then. These joys of yours which you are so afraid of losing—they are but bubbles and they burst. They are mere child's toys and you break them and have done with them. And you yourself will soon be where no more bubbles are blown and no more toys made to sport with! Do not, therefore, make so much noise about your joy—there is nothing in it. Sirs, you might throw your joys to the dogs and even they would refuse them! The joys that a man can know apart from Christ are unworthy of an immortal being—they are unsatisfactory, delusive, and destructive. And if the religion

of Christ does take all such joys from you, it only removes from you mischiefs which you ought to be most glad to lose.

But now we will go farther in dealing with this mischievous misapprehension. You have a notion that if Jesus Christ should come into your heart you would have to give up your pleasures. Now, what pleasures? The pleasures of the hearth and family fireside? The pleasures of seeing your children growing up around you to call you blessed? The pleasures of doing good? The pleasures of discharging your duties as in the sight of God? The pleasures of a quiet conscience? The pleasures of knowing that you can look both your fellow men and your God in the face? None of these pleasures will Christ take away from you! The pleasure of having a good hope as to the hereafter? The pleasure of having a good friend to whom to tell all your troubles? The pleasure of going to your heavenly Father with all your griefs and sorrows? None of these will Jesus take away!

Nor can I conceive of any pleasure that is worth calling a pleasure, which a man will lose by becoming a Christian. Ah, yes, I know what you mean! You mean that you will not be able to go after your sins! Now I understand you! Why did you not say so before and call a spade a spade? Call your sins, sins, but do not call them pleasures! And learn that the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season, are but Satan's baits by which he takes souls upon his hook to their destruction. You shall lose no pleasure but that which is unhealthy, unfit for your soul, unsatisfactory in itself, and unworthy of your nature. If you come to the Cross you shall find of a truth that, "Religion never was designed to make our pleasures less." It multiplies our truest and purest pleasures a thousand-fold.

"Oh," you say, "but I shall have to give up my liberty!" Your liberty? In what respect? Your liberty to be honest and to be upright? Your liberty to love your neighbor? Your liberty to be kind to the unthankful and the ungenerous? Your liberty to go about doing good? Your liberty to search, and judge, and know for yourselves? You will have to give up none of this in becoming a Christian! In fact, I dare to tell you that you will have a liberty conferred upon you far more wonderful than any liberty which you as yet have known. "He is the free man whom the Truth of God makes free, and all are slaves besides."

Jesus Christ gives a man such an independence of spirit that he fears no one, but does what is right actuated by the spirit of right within him. And then he goes through the world fearless of oppressors, dauntless and courageous under all circumstances, the Lord's free man. You will not have, then, to give up your liberty. Yes, I know what you mean—you mean liberty to sin, that is to say, liberty to ruin yourselves! Thank God that liberty will be taken from you, for you never had any right to possess so terrible an engine of destruction! But it shall be so taken from you that you yourself will be glad to miss it.

Why, look at that swine, yonder, wallowing in the mire—a miracle transforms it into an angel—has not that angel liberty to go and wallow in the same filth as before? Certainly he has! But does he ever use it? No, it is contrary to his seraphic nature to be found reveling

in mire. So will it be with you. You will not care for those things which are now your delight, but, being made free from sin you will count it foul scorn to serve it any longer. Oh, it will be no loss of liberty, but the unloosing of all your bonds! Still you say, "If I were a Christian it would make me melancholy!" What for? Why should it make you melancholy? Make you melancholy to think that, if you live, God will be your Shepherd, and you shall not want? Make you melancholy to think that when you die—

"Jesus can make your dying bed feel soft as downy pillows?" Make you melancholy to believe that you are on the way to Heaven, and that when the trials of this poor life are over you shall be with Jesus forever? I cannot imagine it! Let not Satan's lies deceive you. It will drive your melancholy most effectually away if Jesus Christ comes into your soul.

Now, I will put a few things to you, with the deepest earnestness, for I long to see you turned from your evil ways and saved by the Sovereign Grace of God. O that the Holy Spirit may press home upon you the arguments which I try to use! You have heard the story of the Savior who came from Heaven to earth to die for His enemies. Do you believe that He came to make us miserable? Can you look into the face of that Man who bled for sinners, that they might live, and believe that He came here with the malevolent design of making men wretched? You know better! In your heart you know better!

There must be joy in that which such a man works out—so gracious a Redeemer must intend our best happiness. Listen to His teachings and I will ask you, then, whether they tend to make anyone miserable? Point me to a precept where the Savior bids us cease to rejoice. I invite you to find in the Word of God a commandment against sober, solid, pure, holy joy! I will find you words like these, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice." "Rejoice you in that day, and leap for joy." What day? A bright day? No. "When they shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake."

He began His first sermon with the word, "blessed," and He repeated the word many times. And as He was at first, so He was at the last, for He was blessing His disciples when He ascended into Heaven! He came into the world that His teaching might make men blessed, both here and hereafter. I will ask you again whether you notice in His followers any particular misery. Some of them, through sickness, may be sad, and there may be some who profess to be Christians who have not enough religion yet to make them happy. But the most of us are a happy people. I will bear my witness, and speak for myself. I believe I have a spirit which delights in happiness and that I am not, naturally, one of the dullest of

mankind. I am not conscious, now, of being anything but simply honest in what I am about to say, and I can assure you that nothing has ever given me such joy as the knowledge that Jesus Christ is mine.

I have had to suffer a great deal of pain lately. And nothing has assisted me to bear its sharpest twinges, and they have been sharp, indeed, like the thought that—

"His way was much rougher and darker than mine."

I tell you, young men, you who want to see life, you must see Christ! You who want to have true happiness, a happiness to rise up and to sleep with, a happiness to live with and to die with—not the happiness of those silly butterflies that fly from flower to flower and are never content except they are in the theater or the ballroom—but the happiness of a man that is worth calling a man—I tell you such solid happiness is to be found only in vital godliness! I am of the same mind as the poet Young, who said—

"A Deity believed is joy begun. A Deity adored is joy advanced. A Deity beloved is joy matured: Each branch of piety delight affords." God is my witness, I lie not, there is a joy to be found in knowing Christ which all this round world beside cannot be found—search it through and through! "O that you had hearkened to My commandments! Then had your peace been as a river, and your righteousness as the waves of the sea."

One thing I will also say and then have done with this point. You really believe that religion is a happy thing, though you pretend you do not. You must confess, and you do confess, that you desire to die like a Christian. You like for the present, perhaps, to indulge in this folly and that iniquity, but you would like to die with Christ, would you not? Then if you would be like a Christian in death, you must be like a Christian in life. You have down deep in your heart, even though you may deny it, a consciousness that faith in Jesus is worth having and that it would be worlds better for you if you were converted and had the Holy Spirit dwelling in your hearts.

Now, do not check that thought. Do not, I pray you, quench that inward consciousness. Believe it, for it is true, and oh, may you tonight, by Divine Grace, be led to seek the Savior! And may you find Him before you give sleep to your eyes or slumber to your eyelids. My longing for you is that you may be saved! My heart bleeds over the prospect of your eternal ruin. O that you may be led to Jesus! May you trust your soul in the hands of Jesus who was crucified, and you shall find that He does not torment you, but is comfort, fullness of comfort to your spirit.

II. My time flies by me all too rapidly and I shall need all there is left for the second point, which is A QUERULOUS QUESTION—"What have I to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God Most High?" "What have I to do with You?" This is a question which we have heard many times. Poor people often ask it. I heard a workman say, "Well, I have nothing to do with religion. I know it is all very well for my master, for parsons and fine ladies, and aristocrats and old women— but it is of no use to me. I have to work hard and I have a family to bring up—it has nothing to do with me."

Now give me your hand, my good fellow, and, believe me, you are quite mistaken. Why there is nobody in the world whom it has more to do with than it has with you, for "the poor have the Gospel preached to them." Jesus Christ sends His Gospel especially to those who labor and are heavy laden. Moreover, I do not know anyone who could need it more than you do, for you have not very much in this life to cheer or comfort you. It is a hard fight to

get through this world at all in times like these. But if you have a good hope for the next world to help you in the battles of this life, then you will bear your trials and you will cheerfully endure the hardships which heavenly wisdom appoints for you.

There are a great many working men and their wives here tonight who are members of this Church, and I know if they were to stand up for the purpose—and hundreds of them could—each one of them would tell you that the best inheritance they have ever had has been an interest in Christ, and that they never found themselves so truly blessed as when they laid hold on eternal life and trusted in Jesus! It has everything to do with you working people! I love you and I long that you may believe this great Truth of God and put it to the test.

But very often the wealthy say, "What have we to do with You?" Lavender kid gloves and the Gospel are not always well agreed—the upper circles are none the nearer Heaven because of their imaginary elevation. There are also certain learned gentlemen who are instructed in metaphysics and philosophy who patronizingly inform us that the restraint of religion is a very proper thing to keep the working classes in some kind of order, but really, they, themselves, are several degrees above it. Thus they say, as plainly as they can, "What have I to do with You?" Ah, the greatest fools in the world

are those who despise other people, and they certainly do this who say that a thing is good enough for others, but quite unworthy of such excellent people as themselves! Who are they that they should lift up their heads so high?

God "has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." And I reckon that that which is good for the poorest dustman, with his bell, is also good for the richest nobleman with his stars and garters. And that which may be a blessing to the most ignorant will also be a blessing to the most learned. O my Brethren, educated, refined, wealthy, as you may be—the Gospel of Jesus has everything to do with you! The giant minds of Milton and of Newton found ample room in the Gospel! They delighted to bathe, like leviathan, in the ocean of Divine Truth. Speak of philosophy? There is nothing so philosophic as the doctrine of the Cross of Christ! And as to metaphysics, if a man shall delight himself in these, he shall find arm room and elbowroom enough in the study of the Doctrines of Grace!

Here the stoutest champions of logic may meet each other in the arena of debate. Here is room for the most profound erudition. And if you should study till you know all things, yet shall you find that the knowledge of Christ Jesus surpasses all knowledge, and that His Cross is the most excellent of sciences. There is much to do with you, you great ones! May Grace bow your necks to the yoke of Jesus!

"What have I to do with You?" say this and that individual in this vast assembly. There may be many here who are saying, "Religion has nothing to do with me." But, young woman in your beauty, religion will add a new charm to your attractions, an unfading luster such

as nothing besides can yield! The knowledge of Christ Jesus shall give you a beauty of mind that shall last when the worm has furrowed that fair brow, and your well-fashioned form has dissolved into the old brown dust which is the residue of all living. Young man with all your manhood about you, full of life and spirit, Jesus Christ has much to do with you! He can make you more manly than you otherwise would have been. He can bring out the noble points of your character and educate you to be something more than school or university can make you.

And you who are in business, this will help you in your cares. You who have to toil, and slave, and bear the troubles of life—Jesus Christ will comfort and sustain you. And you gray-heads—who can need Jesus Christ more than you? Here is your staff, your dying pillow, your immortal rest. What has He to do with you? Why, I trust that you have much to do with Him, and if you have not, yet at least He has something to do with you which I will now show you. What have you to do with Christ? There are two or three matters in which all of you have to do with Christ, whether you will or not, and the first is this—it is because of His intercession that you are alive tonight.

Your tree brought forth no fruit, and the Master said, "Cut it down." Why, then, does it stand? Why? Because the Husbandman said, "Spare it yet another year." Shall that tree ungratefully say, "What have I to do with the Husbandman," when it owes itself to Him? Ah, Friend, the Jesus whom you despised has interposed and lifted His pierced hand between you and the sword of Justice or your body would at this hour have been in the grave, and your soul would have been tormented in the pit! You have something to do with Him, then. Feel you no motions of penitence at the thought? Does not the Spirit of God lead you to honor the Author of your continued existence?

Again, you have this to do with Christ: that it is entirely owing to Him that you are now in a place where the Gospel can be proclaimed to you! O Sinner, there could have been no hope, no Gospel hope for you if Jesus had not died! What balm would there have been in Gilead, what physician there, if Jesus had not come from Heaven to save? The fact that you are able to hear me say, and that I am able to say it, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved"—that fact you owe to Christ! Otherwise, if we had met together it would only have been to remind each other that we were under God's curse, and that when this life was over we should go to a world of misery. Now we hear the silver trumpet sounding with the love notes of the heavenly invitation, "Come to the banquet of mercy, you lame, and halt, and blind!" The chief of sinners may come, and, if they trust in Jesus, they shall be saved! But were it not for the Crucified Son of the highest, no note of hope could reach the ears of the guilty!

I remind you, further, that if you ask, "What have I to do with Christ?" the time is hastening when that question will receive a most conclusive answer. At the Last Great Day, if you have nothing to do with Him as a Savior, you will have to appear before Him as Judge.

The days of Divine Grace will then be over. The Great White Throne will be set in the heavens and a congregation infinitely greater than any we have ever seen will be gathered around that dreadful tribunal. All men must put in a personal appearance at the last assize, and each one will hear his final sentence. Ah, you cannot escape! You cannot hide yourselves from the eye and hand of the Judge! The mountains refuse to bow their heads to cover you, and the rocks will not open their flinty heart to receive you!

The eyes of fire find you out, and the voice of thunder says, "I was hungry, and you gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and you gave Me no drink." "Because I have called, and you refused, I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded." "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." We must have to do with Christ. You may get away tonight or any other night, and go into the haunts of sin and say, "I will not be followed by the arrows of the Gospel," but the arrows of Justice will surely overtake you! You may escape from the Savior, but you will rush into the arms of the Judge! You may fly from your Friend, but you will only make Him your enemy. You may waste your life in neglecting Him but the next life will never end, and your neglect shall bring upon you a remorse which can never know an alleviation.

"What have I to do with You?" The question is invested with great solemnity! Dear Hearer, trifle no longer. Weigh well the question we have been considering and never venture to ask it again! Shall I tell you, before I close, what Jesus Christ may have to do with you and what He has to do with many now present who have trusted Him? It would be a thousand mercies, and a thing to sing of in Heaven, if some who came in here utterly careless tonight should go away impressed. I am so thankful to be able to preach to you again in the evening. I thank God I am able to be here. I thirst and pant to be at my solemn but beloved work again. I am so glad to be again employed by my Lord as the means of warning and entreating poor sinners. I thought I could not better show my thankfulness than by seeking the conversion of some who are farthest away from seriousness.

I do hope many of the people of God have been praying that a blessing may come. My own soul keeps praying as I speak. O that the Lord may hear me! I may have some here who have never heard the Gospel before, and others who have only dropped in out of curiosity. May this be "a word in season" to such. Some of us were once as careless, as godless, as hopeless and as sinful as any of you can be, and Jesus Christ has had this to do with us—He showed us our lost estate! He broke our hearts and then He bade us look to Him! Oh, happy day when we did so! We saw Him, by faith, hanging on the tree and we believed that He had suffered there for us. We rested our souls upon what He had done and ever since that day, instead of saying, "What have I to do with You?" we have felt that we have everything to do with Him!

He washed us from our sins—our sins could never have been taken away from us by any other means. He clothed us with His righteousness—we have no other righteousness

to wear than that which He has worked out and brought in. Since we have been brought into fellowship with Him we have found it to be our pleasure to be obedient to His commands, our privilege to believe His promises, our joy to plead His name at the Mercy Seat, our transport to have converse with Him, and our delight to expect the time when we shall be like He, and shall see Him as He is. You are no judges of what the Christian knows of enjoyment if you are not Christians yourselves! You can no more judge of spiritual delights than a horse in a field can judge of the pleasures of the mathematician or the astronomer. You have not the nature that qualifies you for it.

There is another world inside this world, another life within this life, and no one knows it but the man who has believed in Jesus. But, having believed in Jesus, thousands of us who are not enthusiasts nor fanatics bear our witness that Jesus Christ is so precious that if men did but know Him, they must love Him! If you did but know what delight it is to be a Christian, you would blame yourselves that you have lived so long without being one, too. If you could but know the sweetness of having Christ to be yours, you would not wish another hour to pass over your heads before you could say, "Christ is mine."

The way to have Christ is to trust Him. There is life in a look at Jesus. There is nothing for you to do, nor even to feel, but simply to come just as you are and trust Jesus. This is the Gospel, "He that believes and is baptized, shall be saved." Baptism is the outward expression of your faith. You are immersed in water to signify that you believe that you are buried with Christ, and that you rise again to life in Him. But the saving matter is the believing—the trusting is the great soul-saving Grace. Baptism follows as a test of obedience, and a means of refreshment to the soul. "He that believes on Him has everlasting life." "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name."

This night, eternal Father, give your Son to see of His soul's travail. This night, we beseech You, grant that some may no longer reject Your Son, but may the eternal Spirit, who can plead as we cannot, work effectually with the wills and consciences of men and compel those to come in who, up to now, have stood outside, that Your House of Mercy may be filled. The Lord answer the desire of our hearts, for Jesus' sake. Amen.